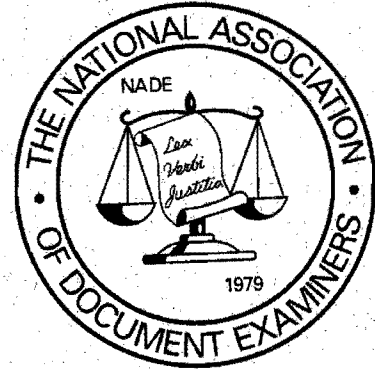


# Journal of The National Association of Document Examiners

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## **HANDWRITING RESEARCH – CAST A WIDE NET**

by

Marcel Matley

Some med/psych journals regularly have papers in some way related to handwriting. Complaints that scientific research into handwriting production and identification is lacking are more readily put to rest, and the examiner's knowledge is greatly increased, if a wide net is cast in public, legal and medical libraries. Below are some citations that illustrate the importance of handwriting in occupational therapy and thus in occupational activities, and that also indicate that handwriting can be an excellent barometer of difficulties other than with writing itself.

When surveying journals of this nature, one stumbles on things an indexing service would not find. Such are the two items which reproduce actual handwriting of children in another journal. In one, several disabled children were writing to say how an article by a disabled man encouraged them. A citation which does not prove out for the intended purposes at a given moment, such as the first item below, may be of great value at another time. That one reference might be the key someday to solving a problem.

Most local public libraries have an interlibrary loan service. Investigate the academic and university/college libraries in your general area. Unexpected gems are waiting to be found. For example, in law libraries one might find paleographic materials once given to the library or that the librarians used to represent general

culture in the collection. University of California at San Francisco Med Library has several nice works on that topic. Who would have guessed?

Enjoy perusing this tiny example from a database of several thousand citations, and know you also can start building a database to serve your special interests. By the way, several other journals have far more handwriting materials than this one, though it is above average in coverage.

NOTE: The (I) indicates that the item is included in the QDE Index database. This happens only if there is direct application to problems in forensic work. All items have some indirect application, because any advance in scientific study of handwriting will eventually enrich forensic applications. This examiner's database includes citations to more papers that have not yet been seen than to those that have. The former are included because part of research is collecting citations to things one might want or need to retrieve in the future. This practice also helps to remind one how limited the current state of one's knowledge is, thus engendering intellectual modesty in making claims and forming opinions.

1. AMERICAN JOURNAL OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY. 16:141-2, May-June 1962. Intensive stereognostic training. Effect on spastic cerebral palsied adults. Author(s): Ferreri, Joan Ann.

NOTE: The reference given to this paper indicated it might be about handwriting, but upon seeing it I realized it was not related to handwriting. Part of research is going up many blind alleys.

2. AJOT. 42:647-52, Oct. 1988. A description of grip strength in preschool children. Author(s): Robertson, Andrea. Deitz, Jean. NOTE: Though giving no mention of handwriting, it is possible that some case may need evidence that a writing required more grip strength than a preschool child could muster, such as a heavy writing instrument giving deep pressure grooves in continuous writing. This article provides such information.
3. AJOT. 44:736-40, Aug. 1990 (I) Incidence of atypical pencil grasps among non-dysfunctional adults. Author(s): Bergman, Kerstin P. NOTE: Page 737 illustrates seven different grips of the pencil, a thing one might need to explain some day.
4. AJOT. 44:893-900, Oct. 1990. (I) Descriptive analysis of the developmental progression of grip position for pencil and crayon control in non-dysfunctional children. Author(s): Schneck, Colleen M. Henderson, Anne. NOTE: This goes the previous paper three better, illustrating ten grips on page 895, but each gives some the other does not.
5. AJOT. 45:701-6, August 1991. Comparison of pencil-grip patterns in first graders with good and poor writing skills. Author(s): Schneck Colleen M.
6. AJOT. 46:509-12, June 1992. The relationship between elbow position and grip strength. Author(s): Kuzala, Elizabeth Ann. Vargo, Michael Charles. NOTE: Though handwriting is not mentioned, the data are directly applicable. It is a good idea to experiment with what different arm and elbow positions will do to your own writing. Maybe have a group do the same experimental positions and compare results.
7. AJOT. 46:785-92, Sept. 1992. Effects of aging on adult hand function. Author(s): Shiffman, Lori M. NOTE: Though not specifically on handwriting, it surely is informative about the background information we might need in our next exam of a senior citizen's alleged signature.
8. AJOT. 46:898-903, Oct. 1992. Fine motor activities in elementary school: Preliminary findings and provisional complications for children with fine motor problems. Author(s): McHale, Kathleen. Cermak, Sharon A. NOTE: Handwriting is the most common of all fine motor movements we employ. The development of hand agility and skill seems to have direct bearing on development of intelligence.
9. AJOT. 47:919-6, Oct. 1993. (I) The influence of ergonomic factors and perceptual-motor abilities on handwriting performance. Author(s): Tseng, Mei Hui. Cermak, Sharon A. NOTE: Courts have said that experts should explain the causes of the phenomena they observe. In Scholastic Philosophy the very definition of scientific knowledge is knowledge of causes. Courts determine liability, and liability is based on causation. Identification of an agent from the agent's effects (the writer is the agent causing the effect known as handwriting) is based on determining causation by study of the effects, the results. The more we know of the factors affecting the characteristics of handwriting, the less likely we are to mistakenly identify the writer, the agent producing it.
10. AJOT. 48:982-8, Nov.-Dec. 1994. Relationship between visuomotor and

handwriting skills of children in kindergarten. Author(s): Weil, Marsha J. Amundson, Susan J. Cunningham.

NOTE: They conclude most children will be ready to learn how to write by the end of kindergarten. Actually, graphic activity can start a lot sooner, and those who have had children can attest to the strong inclination for graphic activity, as on the newly painted living room wall. Indirectly such research as this also teaches us what can be missing in performance of writing by the visually impaired.

11. AJOT. 49:763-71, Sept. 1995. Development of in-hand manipulation and relationship with activities. Author(s): Humphrey, Ruth. Jewell, Karen. Rosenberger, Robin Cole.

NOTE: Of several activities studied, two were graphic activities though not handwriting.

12. AJOT. 49:772-4, Sept. 1995. Clinical interpretation of "Development of in-hand manipulation and relationship with activities." Author(s): Case-Smith, Jane.

13. AJOT. 50:133-8, Feb. 1996. How forearm position affects grip strength. Author(s): Richards, Lorie Gage. Olson, Bonni. Palmiter-Thomas, Pamela.

NOTE: The bottom line is given on page 138, in the last two sentences: "Knowledge of body positions that afford the strongest grips is needed when designing and spatially orienting equipment that requires a maximum grip to operate. Our results suggest that equipment requiring such a grip should be designed to allow gripping to occur with the forearm in the supinated position." Supination is positioning the hand palm up, while pronation is positioning

the hand palm downward. Writing requires more pronation than supination, and complete supination makes writing impossible. It would seem then that the writing position automatically reduces the grip strength available for the writing task.

14. AJOT. 50:732-739, Oct. 1996. Factors that relate to good and poor handwriting. Author(s): Cornhill, H. Case-Smith, J.

NOTE: This item has not yet been retrieved. Although the title promises information of direct value to us, one cannot evaluate a paper solely by its title. Some with very promising titles turn out to be of little value, and some with very unpromising titles provide critically important information. You do not really know what your Christmas present is until you open it.

15. AJOT. 51:553-61, July-Aug. 1997. Educational participation of children with spinal cord injury. Author(s): Dugeon, Brian J., et al. NOTE: Page 557-558 discusses "Augmentative Writing Aids" and the difficulties these children experienced.

16. AJOT. 51:605-7, July-Aug. 1997. Biofeedback for writer's cramp. Author(s): O'Neill, MaryAnn E. Gwinn, Katrina A. Alder, Charles H.

NOTE: The good results lasted for about a week. Naturally. Handwriting is a habitual activity and only positive habit retraining with disciplined practice will eliminate poor writing habits.

17. AJOT. 52:248-55, April 1998. Test-retest reliability of the evaluation tool of children's handwriting-manuscript. Author(s): Diekema, Susan M. Deitz, Jean. Amundson, Susan J.

NOTE: A study of legibility of first- and second-graders with handwriting dysfunction.

18. AJOT. 52:256-8, April 1998. Clinical interpretation of "Test-retest reliability of the evaluation tool of children's handwriting-manuscript." Author(s): Schneck, Colleen M.

19. AJOT. 54:9-17, Jan.-Feb. 2000. Grip form and graphomotor control in preschool children. Author(s): Burton, Ellen W. Dancisak, Michael J.

NOTE: Concerning how to measure effect of various types of grip on drawing accuracy. By application, manner of gripping the writing instrument will affect ability to make accurately the letter forms intended. They "found" that teaching new grips only helped improve good performance, not bad. However, I think they may not have considered presence of multiple problems in poor performance and that it takes time to overcome entrenched habits of poor performance.

20. AJOT. 54:18-9, Jan.-Feb. 2000. Clinical interpretation of "Grip form and graphomotor control in preschool children." Author(s): Windson, Mary-Margaret.

21. AJOT. 54:83-8, Jan.-Feb. 2000. Perceptual-motor function of school-age children with slow handwriting speed. Author(s): Tseng, Mei Hui. Chow, Susanna M. K.

NOTE: Handwriting is not a single skill. It requires coordinate use of multiple skills, just as it requires the coordinate use of multiple neuromuscular functions. Perception provides continual feedback during the process of handwriting, so that any dysfunction in perception or processing of perceptions will cause dysfunction in handwriting.

22. AJOT. 55:175-83, March-April 2001. Pencil grasp and children's handwriting legibility during different-length writing tasks. Author(s): Dennis, Juli L. Swinth, Yvonne.

NOTE: I have used "grasp" to mean grabbing the pen too tightly, while here it simply means "grip." One has to be sure one understands how an author is using a term. Much misunderstanding, and thus much argument even to the point of antagonism, comes from people using the same word in different meanings or different words in the same meaning and not realizing it.

Here it is in early 2003, which means there are two more years of gems in this journal waiting to be discovered.

*Marcel Matley earned a Master of Arts degree in Library Science before studying handwriting analysis and achieving certification in 1981. That study continues with reading in all aspects of handwriting.*

*In 1985 Marcel formally began full-time work as a document examiner, doing business as A and M Matley, Handwriting Experts of California. He has authored several published monographs and articles and presented classes and seminars and he has also presented at several professional conferences.*

*Marcel's home is in San Francisco, where he has a personal collection of a bit over 6,000 items in forensics and handwriting. With an appointment, both collections are available for on-premises reference use only.*

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My e-mail address is [matleyhwexpirt@aol.com](mailto:matleyhwexpirt@aol.com). Please note AOL did not permit me to have the second "e" in "expert." I have no idea why.

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If I cannot assist you for any reason, I will endeavor to assist you in finding a reliable expert.